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ABSTRACT

Since intelligence is a highly respected universal value, education must build on sociocultural and educational expectations of diverse learners. Multicultural education is useful in tapping diverse learners' multiple intelligences. The concept of multiple intelligences is linked to multicultural education, with the interface between the two resulting in multiple opportunities for learning in diverse settings. Several assumptions underlie interest in the study of intelligence, including: all learners are intelligent in their own way and innately intelligent given their biological endowment, all avenues of intelligence relate to and enhance one another, and intelligence drives instruction and vice versa. In multicultural contexts, multiple learning opportunities can occur through full engagement of all learners. Intelligence-driven pedagogy appeals to diverse learners in cognitive and affective ways. Proposed guidelines for underlying the structure of intelligence-based curriculum and instruction emphasize tapping, transferring, activating, assessing, and manifesting intelligence. As teachers implement intelligence-based practices, they should remember that: pedagogical practices must relate to and enhance all learners' intelligence within and outside of school; the construct of intelligence must be conceptualized within the global context of multicultural competence; and cultural, linguistic, and social variables exert a huge influence on intelligent learning and skill development. (Contains 11 references.) (SM)

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Beyond Multiple Intelligences: Implications for Multicultural Teachers

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Brief Overview

Intelligence has long been studied and conceptualized by many cognitive psychologists and education researchers. Recent studies have examined various cognitive phenomena that extend beyond intelligence quotient (IQ), to embrace other avenues of human's abilities, skills, and interests. Christison & Kennedy (1999) point out that, traditionally, measures of intelligence have narrowly focused on linguistic and logical abilities; while recently, focus has shifted to other forms of intelligence to include a wide range of diverse abilities and faculties.

Howard Gardner seems to be the most frequently cited researcher in the study of intelligence as it pertains to educating children. Gardner (1983) shows himself to be a thorough student of cognitive psychologists (e.g. Piaget, 1973; Greeno, 1989) as he hypothesized that humans possess a diversity of intelligences that can be manifested in one's behavior. The most recent version of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory identifies eight skills and abilities. These are:

Linguistic Intelligence: This enables one to engage in various forms of language discourse as they read, write, and do language.

Logical/Mathematical Intelligence: This enables humans to engage in logical reasoning and do math.

Visual/Spatial Intelligence: This enables one to engage in perception and visual discourse as they think in terms of space, shape, color and other graphic cues.

Bodily/Kinesthetic Intelligence: This enables one to engage in physical activity through mind-body connections.

Musical Intelligence: This enables one to appreciate and produce suprasegmental features of speech and music such as melody, tone, intonation, pitch and the like.

Naturalist Intelligence: This enables one to appreciate and interact with natural elements around them as they see themselves a major part of nature.

Interpersonal Intelligence: This enables one to engage in affective discourse as they make sense of and respond to other's feelings, intentions, motivations and the like.

Intrapersonal Intelligence: This enables one to understand themselves in relation to others and vice versa.

This characterization has marked a paradigm shift with regard to the study of intelligence. Thus, the question has become how humans are intelligent rather than intelligent humans are. In other words, the real issue is not how smart are we, but how are we smart.

Although such construct has gained momentum among educators, the global context of intelligence transcends any quantifiable form. For instance, one's need for moral and spiritual reasoning can be seen as the byproduct of some kind of intelligence within universal faculties. Likewise, ethical interaction among humans can be seen as a manifestation of some kind on innate ability.

Undoubtedly, the study of intelligence is as complex as human needs and wants. Accordingly, it is imperative that intelligence is studied within a comprehensive framework that not only accounts for the cognitive diversity of humans, but also for other cultural and social aspects of diversity.

Multi-Intelligence: A Multicultural Framework

Various aspects of culture and social realities have been emphasized in the development of intelligence (Gardner, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978). Furthermore, since intelligence of all forms is a highly respected universal value (Brualdi, 1996), educational treatments must build on sociocultural and educational expectations of all learners in the diverse classroom (Nieto, 2000).

As a concept that encompasses an array of sociological, sociolinguistic, sociocultural, psychological, philosophical, and pedagogical elements (Bennett, 1999; Suleiman, 1996; Suleiman, 1998), multicultural education can be seen as a viable tool to tap diverse learners' multiple intelligences with promising educational consequences.

In order to provide a philosophical foundation for effective schooling, it is worthwhile to look into the definition of multicultural education within which various aspects of intelligence can be incorporated in curriculum and instruction. According to Suzuki (1984), multicultural education is defined as a multidisciplinary educational program that provides multiple learning environments matching the academic, social, and linguistic needs of all students. In addition, it also builds on multiple cognitive abilities and faculties of all learners regardless of their gender, color, or social background so that they can reach their full potential. Thus the development of basic cognitive, academic and social skills are equally important in multicultural settings. Within this overarching democratic framework, multicultural education should also foster students' and educators' ability to analyze critically and make intelligent decisions about real-life problems and issues through a process of democratic, dialogical inquiry. Finally, multicultural education should help conceptualize a vision of a better society and acquire the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills to enable them to move

the society toward greater equality of freedom, the eradication of degrading poverty and dehumanizing dependency, and the development of meaningful identity for all people.

Multicultural education also permeates the curriculum and teaching methods including the socialization and interactional processes among diverse participants in the culture of schools. Furthermore, the content and methodology of multicultural education must be founded on a democratic philosophical base that reflects a clear understanding of cultural pluralism and its sociopolitical implications in educational settings.

Providing what deficit theories cannot offer, multicultural education affirms individuals' rights and encourages active participation of diverse groups through a democratic dialogical process (Nieto, 2000). In particular, it affirms the physical, emotional, intellectual, moral, cultural being of all learners in schools and society at large.

The concept of multiple intelligences is keenly linked to multicultural education (Suleiman, 1999). The interface between the two results in providing multiple opportunities for learning in the diverse settings.

Underlying Basic Assumptions

Intelligence is a universal phenomenon that is deeply rooted in the essence of human existence and interaction (Lakoff, 1987; Chomsky, 1985). It can be conceptualized in many different ways based on how it can be manifested. In schools, there are several assumptions that underlie interest in the study of intelligence. These assumptions are:

- All learners are intelligent in their own way
- All learners are innately intelligent given their biological endowment
- All avenues of intelligence relate to and enhance one another
- Intelligence tends to mean different things to different people
- Intelligence is universal, and is not bound by language, race, or culture
- There is a unique interface between intelligence and culture
- Intelligence is both acquired and learned
- Intelligence is as diverse as human needs (e.g. emotional, cultural, etc.)
- Intelligence drives instruction and vice versa
- Intelligence can be assessed and activated in many ways

These basic assumptions should serve as a blueprint to understand learners' abilities and skills. They also should help in planning instructional activities that can help all learners succeed in the diverse classroom.

Pedagogical Implications

In multicultural contexts, multiple learning opportunities can be created through full engagement of all learners. Intelligence-driven pedagogy appeals to diverse learners and their families in cognitive and affective ways. To do so, the following proposed guidelines should underlie the structure of intelligence-based curriculum and instruction:

1. Tapping Intelligence:

This allows teachers to create activities that utilize students' abilities and skills to learn and grow. Tapping activities engage learners to make body-mind connections as they learn through:

- Using physical activities to perform learning tasks
- Collaborating with peers and others to negotiate meaning
- Reflecting on their work to discover meanings
- Asking questions to make the implicit explicit
- Using multiple modes of learning
- Using all senses and experiences
- Utilizing emotional, attitudinal, and motivational forces

2. Transferring Intelligence:

This allows constructing meaning that can be applied outside schools as students interact in problem solving in real-life situations. Transfer activities engage learners to make school-community connections as they learn through:

- Completing homework that builds on school curriculum
- Applying knowledge and skill in terms of their civic roles
- Interacting with others outside schools
- Matching both educational and societal expectations
- Thinking globally and acting locally to solve problems
- Contextualizing learning in proper real-life settings
- Engaging in community service learning opportunities

3. Activating Intelligence:

This requires teachers to help students take ownership of their own learning. Activating tasks help learners move from the known to the unknown through:

- Using self-disclosure activities
- Engaging in reciprocal learning activities
- Collaborating with peers and others to negotiate meaning
- Reflecting on their work to discover meanings
- Unpacking of knowledge and skill

4. Assessing Intelligence:

This allows teachers to diagnose dominant talents and abilities and use them to teach with and for intelligence. Assessing activities engage learners to make connections among all avenues of intelligence through:

- Identifying their talents and abilities
- Capitalizing on their knowledge and skill
- Exploring their potential and opportunity
- Allowing access of talent for others' and vice versa
- Creating challenge and motivation for learning

5. Manifesting Intelligence:

This allows teachers to encourage risk-taking and risk-making as students demonstrate skill and talent. Manifesting activities help learners balance their knowledge and skill through:

- Identifying their role in schools and society at large
- Playing their expected civic function in and out of schools
- Enhancing their will and skill to learn and grow
- Moving them from full of skills to skillful

Conclusion

Effective education is central to intelligent teaching and critical learning. The teacher is no longer a dictator of learning content to be rotely memorized, nor is the student a passive receiver of knowledge and skill. Rather, learning and teaching involve intelligent decisions and optimal opportunities. This is especially true in multicultural settings where the basic premise of education is multiplying learning opportunities for all learners. In these settings, students and teachers work together to negotiate the meanings as they engage in a meaningful discourse.

One may find the multi-intelligence framework appealing. Learning in this sense is a mediated activity in which children interact intelligently with the world around them; this includes cultural patterns embedded in their cognitive and social development. That is to say, intelligence keenly linked to a wide range of ingredients as diverse as learners' biological, cognitive, cultural, linguistic, moral, emotional, academic, educational and other needs.

Accordingly, the unique phenomena of intelligence cannot be overlooked or underestimated. Instead, it must be utilized and effectively promoted. To do so, teachers need to bear in mind the following as they implement intelligence-based practices:

1. Pedagogical practices must relate to and enhance all learners' intelligence in and out-of-school life;

2. The construct of intelligence must be conceptualized within the global context of multicultural competence;
3. Cultural, linguistic, and social variables exert a huge power on intelligent learning and skill development.

When learners meet in a classroom, they represent a rich variety of intelligences and talents. Unless teachers understand the underpinnings of the global context of intelligence, learners will be deprived of optimal opportunities for growth.

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